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LAW ENFORCEMENT

Feds, sheriff team to fight crime

New partnerships will utilize federal programs to investigate human trafficking and gang violence

By Sarah Favot*sarah.favot@langnews.com*
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Two law enforcement agencies that have been at odds in recent years announced two partnerships to fight crime within the past two weeks.

The U.S. attorney's office and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department will lead a task force

to investigate human trafficking throughout the county and also work together in Compton as part of a federal program to address gang violence.

In recent years, the U.S. attorney's office has filed criminal and civil complaints against the Sheriff's Department alleging deputy misconduct and civil rights violations in the jails. In August, the two agencies reached a settlement

agreement that concluded the U.S. Justice Department investigations.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell and U.S. Attorney Eileen Decker said in a joint interview the two agencies have always been working together to enforce laws, but the new partnership takes advantage of federal programs. The Justice De-

TASK FORCE » PAGE 6

U.S. Attorney Eileen Decker said her goal in targeting criminal groups is to "take out that organization so that when we prosecute a person, another criminal doesn't just step in their place and take over the organization."

FILE PHOTO

Task force

FROM PAGE 3

partment programs will bring federal resources to the county to assist the department's efforts to combat gangs and human trafficking.

By working together to fight human trafficking — which includes child sex trafficking and labor trafficking — the agencies are looking to root out the criminal organizations that are often victimizing women and children.

Decker said federal prosecutors have unique sentencing abilities — such as a 15-year mandatory minimum sentencing for cybercrimes and the ability to seize assets from a person who is convicted of sex trafficking.

“Our goal federally is to look at it from an organizational perspective and take out that organization so that when we prosecute a person, another criminal

doesn't just step in their place and take over the organization,” Decker said. “We'd like to dismantle the organization.”

The task force, which is funded by a \$1.5 million

dence lead us,” Decker said.

An assistant U.S. attorney will work side by side with Sheriff's Department investigators at the Sheriff's Monterey Park offices.

Other federal agencies

“Gang violence drives the violent crime picture in Los Angeles County. We won't tolerate it and we're looking to hold those accountable to the highest degree possible.”

— Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell

Justice Department grant over three years, will work to determine which cases are prosecuted by the Los Angeles County district attorney or federal prosecutors.

“We've already started having meetings, and we've already agreed that we're all going to look at the cases, decide what's best for the cases, where do we have the best remedy, where does the evi-

will also participate such as the FBI, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, and county departments such as Children and Family Services, Probation and the District Attorney's Office.

McDonnell said he will invite representatives from the county's other 45 law enforcement agencies, so that, “it's a seamless web across the county, so there's

nowhere where the culprits of this will be able to hide.”

The sheriff said the task force will partner with the Coalition to Abolish Sex Slavery and Trafficking to provide services to victims. He said the focus will also be on holding the “Johns” accountable.

In Compton, the Justice Department will administer a two-year program called the Violence Reduction Network, providing law enforcement and city officials federal resources to combat gang violence, human trafficking and homelessness. The sheriff said the program will also involve after-school programs and literacy initiatives giving youth an alternative to gang life.

“Gang violence drives the violent crime picture in Los Angeles County. ... We won't tolerate it and we're looking to hold those accountable to the highest degree possible,” McDonnell said. “And we're also looking for ways to affect kids before they get into gangs.”

L.A. COUNTY WED 10-7-15 Daily Breeze

Supes to review LGBTQ youth services

By Sarah Favot

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After an emotional discussion interrupted by speakers who wanted to be re-heard on another issue, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to examine services provided to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth in county departments.

Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, who introduced the measure, said it was the first time the board unanimously approved a measure in support of the LGBTQ community.

The board will hire a consultant for up to \$100,000 who will create an inventory of the county's LGBTQ-specific programs for youth in the

county's child welfare and probation systems and other areas and will make recommendations on how to improve services.

The discussion on Kuehl's proposal was disrupted by opponents of a proposed 288-room hotel in Marina del Rey, which was approved by the supervisors just prior to Kuehl's motion.

During Kuehl's comments on her proposal, residents and environmentalists gathered in the walkway in the audience of the board's meeting room talking loudly following the supervisors' vote to approve the hotel.

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas stopped the discussion and told the group they were a "significant distraction."

After the exchange,

Kuehl gave an impassioned speech.

"I am the first openly gay person elected to this board," Kuehl said, her voice cracking. "And you people haven't the vaguest idea of what that means."

She said she heard their concerns, but she supported the hotel. The hotel's opponents were concerned about traffic and about rapid development in the area.

"But your rudeness and your concern and your selfishness about your own issues without any recognition about what my kids are going through in their schools, in their lack of services, in the way they are attacked and I don't mean just verbally, this may seem like just another thing to you, but it is not to me," Kuehl added.

County OKs \$600K for South Bay homeless

Supes call problem a crisis needing regional effort

by Donna Littlejohn
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Calling homelessness a crisis in need of a regional strategy, Los Angeles County officials Tuesday agreed to target the South Bay and parts of the Harbor Area with \$600,000 in funds to connect those on the streets with services and permanent housing options.

"This is a crisis and we have to deal with it accordingly," said county Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, who represents inland South Bay communities.

Approval of the county funding comes on the heels of the board's action to set aside \$50 million for the homeless.

The city of Los Angeles, meanwhile, has announced that \$100 million will be spent on housing in that city, which overlaps much of the county supervisors' territories as well.

A homelessness task force, an

HOMELESS » PAGE 9

WED 10-7-15 Homeless Daily Breeze FROM PAGE 1

outgrowth of the plans announced earlier this month by L.A. Councilman Joe Buscaino, also is slated to meet for the first time on Oct. 15 in San Pedro.

The county measure approved Tuesday, authored by Ridley-Thomas and Supervisor Don Knabe, calls for a targeted outreach at "hot spots" identified by the county's Fourth and Second Districts and cities belonging to the South Bay Cities Council of Governments. Harbor Interfaith Shelter in San Pedro and the South Bay Homeless Coalition will assist.

"This is not just a downtown L.A. issue but a true regional issue," Knabe said. "There's still a long way to go, this is just a little piece of the pie, but it's a very important piece."

The measure calls for:

- Persons Assisting the Homeless (PATH) to act as the primary service provider to collaborate with others to create a registry of the names, personal information and needs of homeless people living at each "hot spot."

- Quarterly updates to be given on the number of people assessed, placed in interim or permanent



SCOTT VARLEY — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

L.A. County has OK'd \$600,000 to link the homeless in the South Bay and Harbor Area, such as the person who left carts on San Pedro's Eighth Street in May, with services and housing.

housing, connected to mental health or substance abuse services, and returnees/new people at the encampments.

The two supervisorial districts combined include areas of El Segundo, Gardena, Hawthorne, Lawndale, Torrance, Harbor City, Carson, Wilmington, Hermosa Beach, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, Rolling Hills Estates, Rolling Hills, Rancho Palos Verdes, Lomita and San Pedro.

According to the 2015 homeless count, there are approximately 3,006 people who are homeless in the two districts, which

also include areas outside the South Bay.

Most are single adults and are considered chronically homeless, according to the county report. Some 19 percent of those who are homeless in the South Bay are veterans, a 58 percent increase over 2013 numbers.

Redondo Beach Councilwoman Laura Emdee told supervisors that homelessness is increasing among local cities.

"It's hard to pick up a paper or turn on a newscast and not hear a story about the worsening problems of homelessness in our area," she said, commending

PATH as an agency that already has made progress.

Also attending to voice support were Rolling Hills Estates Councilman Steve Zuckerman; Arnold Carraway, Carson superintendent of recreation and human services; and Jackie Bacharach, executive director of the South Bay Cities Council of Governments.

"Today is another installment" in the ongoing fight against homelessness," Ridley-Thomas said. "The board has made this a priority. ... The problem is acute and warrants immediate action that will be long term in nature."